

As someone who got my degree in communications and spent several years working in the broadcast industry, I have been deeply concerned by the deregulation of the industry. I have seen a multitude of owners in our market turn into a few. I have seen local stations with local newscasters and disc jockeys give way to satellite stations. The public is clearly getting less choice and less variety in what we can watch and listen to.

Fairness and equal time used to be a guiding principle of broadcasting. A certain percentage of airtime was supposed to be devoted to public service. Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is not an example of fairness, equal time, or public service.

Airwaves are considered a natural resource - there is a limit to them, which is why these rules were set up in the first place. Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. I have no doubt that Sinclair can gain friends in high places by showing partisanship, but it does not serve democracy, and does not serve the public interest.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. The FCC needs to take up its earlier role and actually monitor our public airwaves. Thank you.